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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, although we cannot see You with our eyes or touch You with our hands, we have experienced the reality of Your might and majesty. Every time we hear a newborn baby cry or touch a leaf or see the sky, we know why we believe.

Lord, send Your spirit to fill the hearts of our Senators. As they journey toward eternity, may they walk, Lord, this day on the path You have provided. Give them a passion to glorify You in their thoughts, words, and deeds. Provide them with the wisdom to embrace truth, honor, gentleness, and humility.

We pray in Your righteous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 17, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JACKY ROSEN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. ROSEN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, ever since Democrats passed the Affordable Care Act, expanding health coverage and access to tens of millions of Americans, we have had to fight tooth and nail to preserve the law from partisan Republican attacks.

For more than a decade, the assault on our healthcare law was relentless from Republicans in Congress, from the executive branch itself and from Republican attorneys general in the courts. In a landmark vote, we in the Senate prevented the Republicans from repealing the ACA in 2017.

Each time, in each arena, the Affordable Care Act has prevailed, and once again today, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 7-to-2 ruling, upheld the Affordable Care Act in the face of another legal challenge. So let me say definitively: The Affordable Care Act has won. The Supreme Court has just ruled. The ACA is here to stay.

And now we are going to try to make it bigger and better—establish once and for all affordable healthcare as a basic right of every American citizen.

What a day.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on another issue, infrastructure, despite a consensus in Washington that America needs more investment in our infrastructure, it has been decades since Congress passed a stand-alone bill to address the issue. This Congress is working hard to remedy that fact.

As I have repeated, discussions about infrastructure are moving forward along two tracks. One is bipartisan, and the second deals with components of the American jobs and families plan, which we will consider even if it lacks bipartisan support—though, I would note that a recent poll showed that President Biden's infrastructure and family plan is broadly popular. Nearly 70 percent of Americans support President Biden's infrastructure plan. More than 60 percent support additional support for American families.

Now, despite some overdramatized punditry, the truth is both tracks are moving forward very well, and both tracks need each other. So we want to work with our Republican colleagues on infrastructure where we have common ground, and Democrats believe we have other priorities that the Senate must consider above and beyond a bipartisan infrastructure bill, not the least of which is addressing the urgent challenge of climate change.

Yesterday, I convened all 11 Members of the Senate Budget Committee to discuss the reconciliation track. And today, I will convene the group of Democrats negotiating with Republicans to discuss the bipartisan track. We set up the two tracks about a month ago. Each is proceeding along, and the two tracks are parallel, working in concert, progressing well.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on voting rights, now we are here on the precipice of a momentous debate here in the Senate. Last night, I began the

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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process to consider voting rights legislation here on the floor of the Senate next week. The process I used will allow the Senate to consider S. 1 or compromise legislation that is currently being discussed. In either case, our goal remains crystal clear: protect the right to vote, strengthen our democracy, and put a stop to the tide of voter suppression flooding across our country. We will not consider legislation that does not achieve those objectives. The issue is too important.

Republican State legislatures are conducting the most sweeping attack on the right to vote since the beginning of Jim Crow. What is their stated reason for vicious assaults on voting rights? They say it is election integrity.

But listen to these policies and tell me if you think they are about election integrity:

Reducing polling hours and polling places. What does that have to do with election integrity?

Mandating that every precinct, no matter how large or how small, have the same number of ballot drop boxes. What does that have to do with election integrity?

It is saying urban areas should have less ability to vote than rural areas.

No after-hours voting, no 24-hours voting, no drive-through voting.

Requiring absentee ballots to be approved by a notary public.

Making it a crime to give food and water to voters waiting in long lines at the polls.

Allowing a judge or panel of judges to overturn an election.

Allowing a partisan State election board to replace a duly elected county election board if they are "underperforming."

Removing student IDs from the list of valid forms of ID.

Moving the hours of Sunday voting into the evening—which, coincidentally, makes it harder for Black churches to sponsor voter drives after services.

Are any of these policies—I would ask a single Republican on this Senate floor to get up and say any of these policies are dealing with election integrity.

We know what they are doing. They are making it harder for people to vote. And if this so-called voter fraud—election fraud—which we have seen none of in 2020, if they cared about that across the board, why did they aim almost all of their proposals at people of color, at poor people, at young people, at urban people?

We know why. This is not about voter fraud. It is about suppressing the vote, particularly of Democratic-leaning voters. It is despicable. It is anti-democratic. It is what they do in dictatorships—manipulate the vote, instead of counting it accurately.

Georgia, Iowa, Montana, Florida, Alabama, Utah, Arizona, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas—this is where some of these poli-

cies that I just mentioned are now law. They would also be in effect in Texas had Democratic lawmakers not walked out of the chamber in protest. Since the beginning of the year, 14 States have enacted 22 laws—22 laws—to make it harder to vote.

Now, I know what the Republicans are saying. They are saying: Oh, well, we are making it easier to vote but harder to cheat.

But when you look at what they are actually doing, it is perfectly clear that Republicans across the country are making it harder to vote and making it easier to steal an election. They are targeting all the ways that poorer, younger, non-White and typically Democratic voters access the ballot, and they are giving new tools to partisan election boards and unelected judges to interfere with the results of a democratic election—interfere with the results of a democratic election. Does that sound like a democracy? No, it sounds like an autocracy, a dictatorship.

When you lose an election, you are supposed to try to win over more voters, not try to stop the other side from voting. These laws are un-American, autocratic, and against the very, very grain of our grand democracy, which, for immediate partisan advantage, our Republican friends are trying to undermine.

So the Senate is going to debate what to do about these laws at the Federal level next week. In an ideal world, this debate would be bipartisan. Voting rights shouldn't be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, and in the early days of the second-half of the last century, that is just what it was—bipartisan. But, unfortunately, now it has become totally partisan.

Donald Trump and his Big Lie have enveloped the Republican Party, and they run away from truth and honesty and fairness to just appease someone with authoritarian instincts, Donald J. Trump.

And for all the shame that Republican State legislators have brought upon themselves, Washington Republicans have not covered themselves in glory either. Here in Washington, Republicans have failed to forcefully and repeatedly stand up to the Big Lie that the last election was stolen from Donald Trump. That same Big Lie is fueling these voter suppression laws from one end of the country to the other. House Republicans are comparing January 6 to a tourist visit.

I was within 20 feet of these awful insurrectionists. They were not tourists. They were brandishing sticks and guns and this and that.

House Republicans also fired Congresswoman CHENEY. For what? Telling the truth that Joe Biden is President.

Just yesterday, 21 House Republicans voted against awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the police officers who withstood the attack on the 6th. Are Republicans becoming antipolice? Some of the same Republicans who

falsely accuse Democrats of wanting to defund the police are actively refusing to defend the police.

I wish I could say the Senate was totally different than the House—the Republican House—but here we have a Senate Republican saying that it really wasn't a violent insurrection. We have Senate Republicans refusing to include any mention of the causes for January 6 in committee reports, and the Republican minority mounted a partisan filibuster against an independent, bipartisan Commission.

That is what is happening in the present-day Republican Party: a hornet's nest of conspiracy theories and voter suppression in the States and a Washington Republican establishment that is too afraid of Donald Trump to stand up for our democracy with conviction.

So look, we Democrats wish the voting bill would be bipartisan. By all rights, it should be. But the actions in State legislatures like Georgia, Iowa, and Florida were totally partisan. None of these voter suppression laws were passed with bipartisan support—not one. Washington Republicans seem dead set against all remedies, whether it is S. 1, some modified version, or the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which Senator MCCONNELL has recently opposed. So the idea that we can have some kind of bipartisan solution to this partisan attack on democracy befuddles me. Regrettably, the Democratic Party is the only party standing up for democracy right now.

Next week, the Senate will have this debate. Democrats will bring forward legislation to protect voting rights and safeguard our democracy, and we are going to see where everyone stands—everyone.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2093

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2093) to expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and implement other anti-corruption measures for the purpose of fortifying our democracy, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in order to place the bill on the calendar